Sacred Journey

THE JOURNAL OF FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

Spring 2010
vol. 61, no. 2

0 74470 23566 8 02>

Archive Copy

Sacred Journey

THE JOURNAL OF FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

Fellowship in Prayer

encourages and supports
a spiritual orientation to life,

promotes the practice
of prayer, meditation,
and service to others,

and helps bring about
a deeper spirit of unity
among humankind.

SACRED JOURNEY

THE JOURNAL OF FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

Spring 2010, vol. 61, no. 2

Fellowship in Prayer, Inc.

291 Witherspoon Street
Princeton, New Jersey 08542-3227

PHONE: 609-924-6863
FAX: 609-924-6910
WEBSITE: www.fellowshipinprayer.org
EMAIL: editorial@sacredjourney.org

Executive Director

JANET M. HAAG

Editorial Projects Manager

LISA M. CLAYTON

Circulation Manager

LINDA D. BAUMANN

Board of Trustees

HOWARD S. ENDE, *President*
DR. EPHRAIM ISAAC, *Vice President*
LHAKTONG SÖNAM, *Secretary*
LORRAINE SCIARRA, *Treasurer*
REV. REBECCA LAIRD
REV. PAUL B. RAUSHENBUSH
DAVID S. NEWTON
SOHAIB SULTAN

Trustees Emeriti

BHIKSUNI KARMA TRIME LHAMO
REV. DR. ARTHUR CALIANDRO

Visit us online at:

www.fellowshipinprayer.org
Look under *Web Exclusives* for more articles, prayers, poems, and illuminations.

Subscribe

Send your name, address, email, telephone, and $20 ($26 international) for a one year subscription (4 issues) to:

SACRED JOURNEY
Fellowship in Prayer, Inc.
291 Witherspoon Street
Princeton, NJ 08542-3227

Phone: 609-924-6863

Online: www.fellowshipinprayer.org

Submissions

We welcome submissions of articles on prayer, meditation, spiritual experience and practice, religious faith or similar topics, as well as prayers and poetry. We look for writing that expresses an individual's personal experience while also conveying a deeper message of universal appeal. Writing must be accessible to people of all traditions. Please include a brief biography and full contact information: name, address, phone numbers and email. Articles should not exceed 1500 words and should be submitted to the editor by email: submissions@sacredjourney.org. If necessary, they may be mailed.

Material in this publication is copyrighted and may not be reproduced by photocopy or any other means without written permission.

© 2010 Fellowship in Prayer, Inc.
All rights reserved.

SACRED JOURNEY
is a registered trademark of
Fellowship in Prayer, Inc.

Contents

Spring 2010, vol. 61, no. 2

4
A MESSAGE FROM FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER
Minding Our Action
JANET M. HAAG

6
COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY
An Interview with Bernie Glassman

14
ILLUMINATIONS

16
beginning the world
ABRAHAM SCHECHTER

20
PRAYERS

25
We Are That We Are: Some Reflections upon Ranting and Raving with a Buddhist Practitioner
BILL SLOANE

31
The Noahide Path
AVRAHAM GREENBAUM

38
Economic Peacemaking
TOM HEAD

42
SPIRITUAL PRACTICE
Taking an Active Part
DAVID STEINDL-RAST

44
Identity and the Search for a Common Human Purpose
MATTHEW WEINBERG

50
POETRY

54
Spirituality, Religious Wisdom and the Care of the Patient: Gratitude as Viewed in Hinduism
UMA MYSOREKAR

58
A REFLECTION
God in the Darkness
LISA BARSTOW

61
Spiritual Traveler: Co-Creator & Servant
STEWART BITKOFF

64
My Journey
ANGELA PERKEY

67
REVIEWS

68
ENDPIECE
What Knees are For
LINDA ALBERT

Cover photo: © Bob Krist Photography

Minding Our Action

JANET M. HAAG

Nestled among the mountains of Myanmar (formerly known as Burma), is beautiful Inle Lake—home to fishermen who use a one-legged rowing technique to propel their boats through the reeds and floating plants that cover the lake's surface. Standing with one leg on the stern and the other curved around the oar, the fisherman is able to row and spot fish he couldn't see if he was seated. He then lowers tall, conical bamboo nets into the shallow water, gently stabbing at the mossy lake floor to flush the fish out of hiding. This sometimes allows his intended catch to swim away and the fisherman nets only bubbles. When we are done marveling at the beauty and originality of what these fishermen do, we might well be inclined to offer our assistance, to suggest more efficient and effective models for netting fish. And our recommendations might be helpful, or then again, maybe not. This method has allowed these fishermen to sustain themselves and feed their families for generations. It is an activity that is part of their identity, rooted in their history.

As people of good will, our eagerness to be helpful can sometimes get in our way. We think we know what others need, so instead of asking them, instead of being attentive to their individual circumstances and values, we leap into action, impose our ideas, and then wonder why things don't go well. Recently, a group of missionaries in Haiti relocated Haitian orphans (at least they said they thought they were orphans) from earthquake-ravaged Haiti to the Dominican Republic, only to discover these children weren't really orphans at all. Indeed, this is a situation riddled with complexities and I won't attempt to address them all, but more than once as I listened to the news, it occurred to me that in the best case scenario, it is evidence of a desire to help gone askew.

I have a personal example as well. I distinctly recall visiting a farming co-op on the outskirts of Mexico City some years ago.

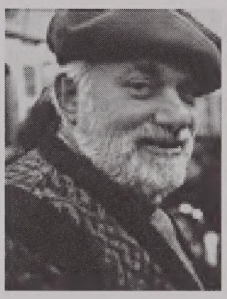
From the moment I arrived, a little girl of about four with a dirt-streaked face, bare feet, and wearing a tattered white dress, latched onto me. As the day wore on, I became convinced that I should rescue her from her poverty-stricken lifestyle, that I should take her back to the States with me, give her a real family and a real home –well, that was until her grandmother showed up. She then ran into her *abuela's* outstretched arms, gave me the biggest, brightest toothless grin ever and waved good-bye. You see, good intentions can be tinged with arrogance.

To bring "mindfulness" to social engagement, Bernie Glassman, our featured interviewee, invites people to live among the homeless for a time if they want to address quality of life issues for these forgotten members of society; he brings holocaust survivors and descendants of SS officers together to meditate and dialogue at the sites of the concentration camps to foster healing; he takes Zen practice from the monastery into the marketplace.

So, back to the traditional fisherman of Inle Lake—what do we have to learn from him? Beyond his dexterity, mental discipline, patience and positive attitude, he stands as a reminder that context is profoundly important in identifying what people really need. As you read this issue of Sacred Journey, dedicated to themes of service and social justice and you ponder what you might do to make a difference, keep in mind the one-legged fisherman. SJ

Janet M. Haag is the Executive Director of Fellowship in Prayer.

An Interview with Bernie Glassman



Zen Master Bernie Glassman is a world-renowned pioneer of Buddhist activism in America. He is a multi-faith spiritual leader, published author, dedicated peace worker and successful businessman. Fifteen years ago, Glassman formally "disrobed," renouncing his priesthood to serve as the lay leader and teacher of Zen Peacemakers, the premiere organization he founded for Socially Engaged Buddhism in the West. Christopher S. Queen, retired professor from Harvard Divinity School and editor of three books on Engaged Buddhism, describes the unifying principle for Zen Peacemakers as "a commitment to healing oneself and the world through plunging into the unknown and bearing witness to the pain and joy of humanity."

Glassman breathes life into these words. He is known for his "Street Retreats," in which he leads participants into New York City to live among the homeless with a view toward bearing witness to the forgotten members of society and then taking actions to improve their lives. Born and raised as a Jewish-American, Glassman understands the pain of the holocaust and he holds "Bearing Witness" Retreats at Auschwitz/Birkenau to bring together youth and adults from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds to meditate at these sites and forge familial bonds.

He is the recipient of many social justice and ethics awards, including U.S. News and World Reports, *"Best of America Award for Social Action." Many consider Glassman one of the preeminent Western Buddhist promoting the integration of spiritual practice with social justice.*

We are privileged to have Zen Master Bernie Glassman joining us for our 60th Anniversary Conference, both as a presenter on our Multi-faith Plenary panel and as a workshop leader. Our interview further highlights his work with Zen Peacemakers.

Fellowship in Prayer: You are the founder of Zen Peacemakers, a force for socially engaged Buddhism. What does that mean?

Glassman: I don't know if "force" is actually the best word. Through Zen Peacemakers, I am promoting socially engaged Buddhism as a spiritual practice in the West—this country and Europe, mainly. That's not to say there aren't a lot of Buddhists doing socially engaged work in the West but they don't usually treat it as their practice. They engage in Buddhist practice and then, social action. Whenever they get burned out or tired they return to their traditional practice to be strengthened and then they go back to their work. I am promoting socially engaged Buddhism as a form of Buddhist practice and by Buddhist practice I mean realizing and actualizing the interconnectedness, the oneness of life. At Zen Peacemakers, we have developed ways of helping people do social action from this standpoint.

In general is Buddhism not socially engaged?

Not like social engagement in the Christian world. If we look back at history, there have been many individual Buddhist leaders who have been socially engaged but Buddhism in general hasn't fostered this as a movement. For example, there haven't been groups within it like the Franciscans or the Maryknolls as major entities. This has started changing over the last twenty years or so and historians are beginning to write about a movement of socially-engaged Buddhism that is redefining the nature and role of Buddhism in a pluralistic modern world. Asian Buddhist leaders like Thich Nhat Hanh from Vietnam or the Dalai Lama from Tibet or Sulak Sivaraksa from Thailand are now very involved in this kind of work. Buddhism in Asia today is not just focused on spiritual liberation for its adherents; it is advocating for social and political liberation and addressing the wide range of human needs. In August, Zen Peacemakers is hosting a symposium with more than fifty presenters; all focused on Western socially engaged Buddhism.

This will be the first gathering of its kind at our site. I've also created a newsletter for Western socially engaged Buddhism There hasn't been one until now. So, you see, all of this is in the process of changing.

Do you think Zen Peacemakers will someday become as influential in Buddhism as the Franciscans or Maryknolls are in Christianity?

I am hoping the Zen Peacemakers will in some ways be more like the Franciscans. I don't know how long it will take to become as big as one of those movements, but I certainly think we're headed in that direction. We're starting to build Dharma Houses, Zen Centers around the world, where the main focus is serving the community. These are similar to the houses of the Catholic Worker Movement.

Was there a seminal moment on your journey that clearly sent you in the direction of service?

I'd list two things that really influenced me. One, I grew up in an atmosphere in which my relatives were inclined toward social engagement so I think this inclination became part of my genes. And two, I have been involved with Zen now for fifty years.

In 1975 I had an experience that really changed my life. I was a Zen priest and I saw my vocation as being in a Zen Center and practicing with people who wanted to practice that way. Then I had an experience in which I encountered what I call "the hungry ghost of the universe." I felt in and with people "all things that were unsatisfied" and I made a vow to myself that I would work to try to satisfy these needs for persons in all walks of life. This led me to take my Buddhist training and experience and start developing ways to do this in all aspects of society, not just in Zen practice, and not just as a Buddhist, but in the business world, in social action, in all different ways. This led me to interfaith work for a more united and peaceful world.

Your activism is rooted in a deep capacity for compassion, how has your Zen practice fostered this?

The experiences that come out of Zen practice are experiences of the oneness of life, the interconnectedness of life. There is a famous Buddhist teacher who lived in the 9th century and said you can tell the depth of a person's enlightenment by how he or she serves others. So, if we really experience the interconnectedness of life, it is natural that we would work to serve all beings. If our experience of oneness in life is limited to ourselves, we're likely going to work to take care of ourselves. If it is limited to our family, we're going to work to take care of them. If our experience of interconnectedness is with the whole of society, we're going to work for society. So, if you want to call this compassion, you can, but I think it is just a natural outflow of the experience of oneness that comes from Zen practice.

Would you describe Zen practice?

There are many forms. Meditation practice is a basic one through which one lets go of fixed ideas and the attachment to ideas. If you can do this, what's left is the experience of the oneness of all things. It is our ideas that allow us to think that we are just such and such, separate from everything else, instead of the whole thing. Through the years, different kinds of Zen practices have arisen to help move this process along. One is called Kōan Study in which you are given things to contemplate, questions to ponder like who am I, what is God.

You often speak about the importance of bearing witness, would you explain this phrase in light of the core practices of Zen Peacemakers?

What I mean by bearing witness is what you could call deep empathy or deep listening. It first comes out of not-knowing, which is not being attached to our knowledge, but being totally

open. Deep listening comes in that space. For example, I wanted to do work for the homeless, so I made my first street retreat to feel what it is like to live the unpredictable life on the streets, to be in that situation—eating in soup kitchens, sleeping in abandoned housing and sharing with others the experience of relying on the generosity of the streets to take care of us.

Bearing witness is plunging into a side of life we may look at only rarely. Let's say you wanted to work with people who are dying. Just about everyone has experienced some loved one going through the phases of dying. If you can just be with that person and deeply empathize with what is going on—I call that bearing witness.

I started Bearing Witness Retreats in Auschwitz to work with diversity; where people from different cultures, different countries, different religions sit together and work in small groups. We listen to all the different voices represented. There we have children of SS officers next to children of survivors along with families of gypsies and gays who were killed at Auschwitz. In this kind of situation, you get out of your own box and bear witness to all of the aspects of diversity that get us into difficulties in the first place. What generally happens by the end of our five-day Auschwitz retreat is that our diverse group becomes a family, all through bearing witness. What starts as an intellectual gathering and people talking about each others' injustices winds up as an exercise of really listening and being in the space of the other.

There is an incredible amount of suffering in the world and there are people who want to do something to alleviate it but they feel overwhelmed. How do you think we can focus our attention and energy in a way that will have the greatest impact?

I think it depends on what comes up. For example, if you're dealing with yourself and all the issues that you as an individual might have, you could feel overwhelmed. You might not have enough

money, you might have an illness like cancer, you might have all kinds of issues. If you look at them and say it's overwhelming, you can't do anything. But if we are one with ourselves, we don't say this because we just do the best we can to take care of ourselves. It is the same with the family. All kinds of things might come up. Our kids might get involved in drugs, there could be all kinds of stuff—and you could say, "It's overwhelming, I can't do anything." But if you're really one with your family you don't do that, you take care of what's happening. Just like a mother and a child. A child is born and there may be all kinds of issues with the child but the mother doesn't say, "It's overwhelming. I'm going to get out of here. I can't take care of my child." She simply does the best she can.

The problem of being overwhelmed arises from our expectations. If we think we're going to solve all the issues or we have expectations about what specifically is going to change, we can easily become frustrated. If we aren't driven by our own expectations and we just take care of the stuff that comes up, I don't think there is any frustration. There is just the work of dealing with what comes up.

You can't do everything. Look at your body. There's so much going on, so many things you don't know about, but you do know what comes up. If your stomach starts hurting, you take care of it. There are things that come right in front of you and you're drawn to them and you just work. There are all kinds of work to be done. Everybody is involved in social action from that standpoint. This is true across the globe.

Does your Jewish heritage have an influence on your work?

I think that's an interesting question. I think all of our *karma*, all of what we go through in life, affects us. From my perspective my Jewishness helps me bring humor to situations. Also, I talk a lot about becoming a *mensch*—the Yiddish word for a person of dignity and honor. In many of my workshops I focus on how to do our work with respect for the dignity of those we seek to serve, of not looking down on the people we're helping, of recognizing the

dignity of everyone and everything. I think this certainly comes out of my Jewish heritage, and so it continues.

What do you think is unique about our time?

I don't think there is anything particularly unique. I think if we go through all of history the same issues come up. You know, I like to bring things down to a very practical level. We've been having children, for thousands, millions of years—whatever your tradition says is the length of humankind. There have been all kinds of theories and books written on how to take care of kids. Then, when someone has a child, it's like starting all over again.

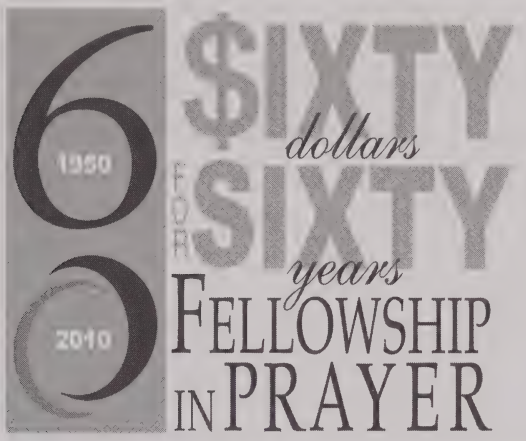
What is your hope for humankind?

My hope is that all of us can do the best we can and not criticize others for doing the best they can. Each of us has to do what we think is the right thing for us to do. When we look around, we really can see all aspects of ourselves. If everyone started recognizing this, it follows that we would conclude we are all just engaged in different ways of doing things.

My hope is that we can live as a family; live as if each person is our child and we are the children of everyone else.

My hope is that through the tenets of Zen Peacemakers, not-knowing, bearing witness and loving action, we can realize the oneness of humankind.

Thank you for your time and sharing your wisdom. We look forward to seeing you at the conference in June.



Fellowship in Prayer is celebrating 60 years of promoting spiritual practice within and across religious traditions as a path to peace and justice! We are here because *you* believe it is important for someone to stand at the crossroads of many faiths, encouraging people to center their lives and claim together the wisdom of the ages and the power of the spirit now to effect personal and social transformation. Thank you for standing with us!

To bring our message of unity and hope to the world for another 60 years, we need your financial support now.

Please consider giving:
$60 for the 60th
$60—a multiple of $60—or any amount
will be gratefully received!

Imagine the possibilities—
if just 1,000 donors gave $60—and if some gave more...

"Go green to give green" by making your contribution via the secure portal on our website www.fellowshipinprayer.org

Call: 609.924.6863

Mail: Fellowship in Prayer
291 Witherspoon Street
Princeton, NJ 08542-3227

I AM NOT INTERESTED IN PICKING UP
CRUMBS OF COMPASSION THROWN
FROM THE TABLE OF SOMEONE WHO
CONSIDERS HIMSELF MY MASTER.
I WANT THE FULL MENU OF RIGHTS.

BISHOP DESMOND TUTU

Doing good to others is not a duty; it is a joy, for it increases our own health and happiness.

ZOROASTER

The sign of the friend of God is that he has three qualities: a generosity like that of the ocean, a compassion like that of the sun and a humility like that of the earth.

BAYAZID IN 'ATTAR

One drop of water helps to swell an ocean;
a spark of fire helps to give light to the world.
None are too small, too feeble, and too poor
to be of service. Think of this and act.

HANNAH MORE

THE IGNORANT SAY LOVE AND GOD ARE DIFFERENT;
NONE KNOW THAT LOVE AND GOD ARE THE SAME.
WHEN THEY KNOW THAT LOVE AND GOD ARE THE
SAME, THEY REST IN GOD'S LOVE.

TIRU-MULAR

Everything we do outside of our formal meditation sessions becomes part of our training in compassion.

HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA

EXPECTING THE WORLD TO TREAT YOU FAIRLY BECAUSE YOU ARE A GOOD PERSON IS LIKE EXPECTING THE BULL NOT TO CHARGE YOU BECAUSE YOU ARE A VEGETARIAN.

RABBI HAROLD KUSHNER

Bear the load of your neighbor's poverty, and let him bear with you the load of your wealth. You lighten your load by lightening his.

SAINT AUGUSTINE

ONCE SOCIAL CHANGE BEGINS, IT CANNOT BE REVERSED. YOU CANNOT "UN-EDUCATE" THE PERSON WHO HAS LEARNED TO READ. YOU CANNOT HUMILIATE THE PERSON WHO FEELS PRIDE. YOU CANNOT OPPRESS THE PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT AFRAID ANYMORE.

CESAR CHAVEZ

JUST AS A FLOWER GIVES OUT ITS FRAGRANCE
TO WHOMSOEVER APPROACHES OR USES IT,
SO LOVE FROM WITHIN US RADIATES
TOWARDS EVERYBODY AND MANIFESTS
AS SPONTANEOUS SERVICE.

SWAMI RAMDAS

beginning the world

ABRAHAM A. SCHECHTER

Only in the last couple of days I've resumed journaling after more than a week's hiatus. A week without assembling words is in itself indicative of a disruption of life's pace. But with the resumption of narrative is a persistent questioning of the meaning of progress. What are the determinants of the soul's advancement?

The mystery of real progress is akin to that of time. Mile markers along roads indicate linear distances, yet it is common in many lives to repeatedly pass by the same signs. Even with experiences of bicycle marathons and swimming laps, I wonder if there's been any tangible progress in the grand scale of my continuum. Or enough. Such pre-occupations become off-putting to me, and I'd prefer to deflect them. The big world is rife with human hardships, revealing an absurdity to worries about the small spaces beneath my feet. They are fleeting, and recognizable by their contexts and connotations. Trying to define self and success is, alas, unavoidable. And if thoughts are to be documented—albeit in passing- even the expressions of obscurity have their places, especially before a re-launch.

Momentum. A fair share of days seems to begin by just showing up. In an effortless perpetual motion, my multitasking flows among objectives, interactions, connecting points of due dates and even unscheduled interruptions. Tasks can even be accomplished while other projects are being done. In the broader sense, work demands can weave between reflection, leisure, memory, and aspiration. One motion feeds another. Knowledge from one school or job adds to the sum and solution of an application in another. Sometimes things actually work this way,

as though decades of rollers and gears have effortlessly and purposefully joined.

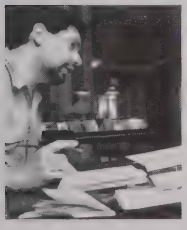
Inertia. Stubborn weeds among the fruitful time periods are those spells of overcoming resistance. Moving out of inactivity (or too much of the same activity) seems to require rebuilding. It's as though the world must be recommenced from its foundations. A few dependable systems falter, or perhaps become obsolete, and suddenly all seems thrown backwards. A 'system' may be mechanical, or internal, or ethereal. And the breach can be mild and unapparent, or overt and stagnating. Stagnation can be so profound that energy must be consumed just to be able to stand—let alone imagining a sustained posture. Navigating through and out of inertia puts the soul in an unusual state of sensitivity that takes nothing for granted. Through the dark night comes a surrendering of unproductive drives for control, despite the unknowing. While sensing what appears to be a very fine thread holding everything together, there is a parallel challenge that this may be an effect of impaired perspective. Though it is easy to admit to knowing very little, it is equally difficult to be convinced that nothing essential is lacking. Wondering about being 'behind in the game' only invites defeatism. Especially in these times. Inertia and resistance can be overcome with a beginning as basic as counting the blessings of what is good. Recommencement can retrace the remembrance of momentum. Chroniclers can retrieve journals written in brighter days and revisit the old fighting form that made reaching these shores possible. In yet more adventures of trust, my thoughts must repeat as often as necessary that the unseen Holy Spirit will always hold my footsteps firm. Looking forward through unknowing and material uncertainty is an act of faith. Holding to it is a continuous exercise of trust. There is one direction to go, and that is forward. In so doing, that tension must give way to savored paces that reclaim the airspaces

© Abraham Schechter

connecting being with environment.

Only a few days ago, I exercised a decision I did not fully realize I had. Hurtled forward by salesmen and financial experts, I very nearly bought a house that I didn't really like—and could barely afford. Indeed, habitations can be investments, but they must also be worthy places to live. Though a valuable learning experience, the whole episode was one of helpless despair. It began to resemble a perilous conveyor belt rolling my misgivings to a distribution dock of no return (and no savings). In the faces of financiers, I followed the forceful intuition I almost suppressed. If I can possibly help it, faith in the future will trump fear and fatalism. I stopped a process that began in trepidation and the ensuing peace has been palpable.

In my gratitude, few things are taken for granted. Something has indeed changed, and by continuing on I'll find out. I paid the building inspector, adding a thank-you letter (written on my cursive typewriter), and will pay February's rent with a relished relief. As I came to see it, all those I met in the process were fine souls. It is in weakness that strength is discovered. I ponder the immortality that happenstance causes me to brush against. It is the heart of God that connects all of us. With this surprise of the freedom already possessed, I happily donated to a few charitable causes. The ability to give is in itself a gift presented to me. I know my steps are guided—even to a threshold of my own some day. But for now I will have to 'begin the world' to some extent, though it needn't be more than simply reconnecting to all I love best. SJ



Abraham Schechter began to journal his sacred journey in 1994, when a friend gave him a blank book as he prepared for a sojourn at Weston Priory. His blog, *La'Vie Graphite*, http://laviegraphite.blogspot.com, draws from his life experiences including his careers in photography, calligraphy, bookbinding, teaching and a decade of participation as a musician in the Taizé monastery's ongoing *Pilgrimage of Trust on Earth.*

Help Me Up

BARBARA ALDRICH

Weak, groping, grasping, trying to understand,
I come to You for answers, for only You have them;
Too brokenhearted and hurting to say the words
That are hidden in my heart, but I know You already know them.
Help me to understand and stop the pain.
My heart is bruised and won't stop aching.
Yesterday I knew happiness and laughter;
Today the rain falls on my doorstep and I have lost my way.
Reach out and heal my broken heart as only You can.
Return to me the peace that I once felt and forgive me
For giving in to shadows—take them away;
I can't, I don't have strength today.
Forgive me and help me up so I can stand where I once stood
And smile again.

Barbara Aldrich resides in rural Nevada. She is the mother of six children and three stepchildren. She serves as an EMT and publishes an online newsletter for her community.

A Call To My Beloved

DOUGLAS RAYMOND ROSE

"My beloved speaks and says: Rise up my love and come away…"
Song of Solomon 2:10

I call out to my Beloved
Here I am—
Seize me with thy presence
Here I bow.
Come meet me forthwith
Face to face—
Let me center upon you God
As in sweet solitude I wait.

I call out to my Beloved
Here I am—
I contemplate thy presence
Here I wait.
Naked came I into this world
Naked I too shall return—
All I have is this moment
Seize me Lord now I pray.

Douglas Rose is an ordained minister in the Assemblies of God church, he is a free-lance writer for *Guideposts* and *Standard Publishing* and columnist for the *Grand Prairie Times*. He is a member of the Academy of American Poets.

Haiku Prayer at Midnight

KATHERINE MOORE

Here I am awake;
eyes staring at the ceiling.
Still my racing mind!

Reach for me, O God.
Gather my scattered pieces.
Pull me together!

Father, let me rest.
Cover me with your feathers
and pour out your grace.

O loving Spirit
carry me on your great wings
and comfort my soul.

Katherine Moore is a grief counselor and spiritual director whose greatest joy is teaching a class entitled "Healing Writing." She is the author of *Dancing Rainbows—Poems and Prayers of Beauty, Struggle and Mystery.* She lives with her husband of over forty years on the coast of North Carolina.

Disturb us, Lord

ATTRIBUTED TO SIR FRANCES DRAKE - 1577

Disturb us, Lord, when
We are too well pleased with ourselves,
When our dreams have come true
Because we have dreamed too little,
When we arrived safely
Because we sailed too close to the shore.
Disturb us, Lord, when
With the abundance of things we possess
We have lost our thirst
For the waters of life;
Having fallen in love with life,
We have ceased to dream of eternity
And in our efforts to build a new earth,
We have allowed our vision
Of the new Heaven to dim.
Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly,
To venture on wider seas
Where storms will show your mastery;
Where losing sight of land,
We shall find the stars.
We ask You to push back
The horizons of our hopes;
And to push into the future
In strength, courage, hope and love.

Jana's Prayer of Jesus

JANA ORSINGER

This prayer was inspired by an article Mark Hathaway wrote many years ago on his translation of The Lord's Prayer *from the Aramaic. Although Jana knows it is unlikely to compete with the beloved* Lord's Prayer *so many people know so well; she thought a fresh version might open someone's heart.*

Our Loving Creator, Silent Music of the Universe,
Awaken us with the shimmering light of your Love.
Transform us with your transcendent smile into joy itself.
Out of the empty hat of our willingness,
pull life out of thin air again!
Give us what we need each day to be caretakers of wonder.
And when we fall victim to unkindness,
bring us quickly home to peace.
Keep us from being captive to fear and open our hearts to Love.
For Love is all there is, the One Song,
the Luminous Harmony, For ever and ever.
Amen.

Jana Orsinger lives in San Antonio with her husband. A trip made several years ago to Hawaii to swim with the wild spinner dolphins off the coast of Kona inspired the joyfulness of this prayer.

We Are That We Are: Some Reflections upon Ranting and Raving with a Buddhist Practitioner

BILL SLOANE

Here's a little light reading. I don't know if I will actually give you what comes out of this typing exercise. It is a postscript to our brief telephone conversation this evening about 'form' and 'being'. What you call conventional truth appears to me to be a simple description of the myriad forms in the world that we perceive. What you call ultimate truth or emptiness, realizing the lack of inherent existence of the phenomenal world, is the being nature of those forms, lacking solidity and definition and, perhaps, lacking any beginning or any end.

Actually, my little leap in finding a personal handle on the meaning of the conventional and ultimate natures, whether this handle is correct or not, was preceded by another thought. Some Native Americans, especially on the Great Plains, venerate, and humble themselves before, the Great Mysteriousness. That is their concept of a God, of the creative force permeating the cosmos. They do not call this presence the Great Mystery, as some people say, because that expression is a noun and what they perceive is dynamic, ever changing, so they use an adverb. I would venture to say that the experience of the Great Mysteriousness is similar in some respects to that of emptiness. Along with this sense of mystery, many native peoples have a deep understanding of the interdependence of all phenomena. If so, that is kind of cool. If not, no matter.

My mind works by comparisons and synthesis, more than analysis. I find another comparison of ultimate truth, one being with nature, a concept from the Mystery Schools, notable in India and the Sacred Himalayans particularly, but also in Europe. These schools work with the language of the great I AM Presence. I AM:

the first person, present tense of the verb 'to be'. I would speculate that the I AM Presence reflects, in part, a correspondence to our emptiness of inherent existence. I simply AM: I am in the past; I am now; I am in the future. At any moment, ultimately, I simply am. I am that I am. The 'psychotic in the attic', the ego personality, what you call the self-grasping mind, is the great imposter, the illusion, which denies one's I AM Presence. A person may reasonably ask: "Am I not I am? When am I not I am?"

For so long, one of my favorite passages from Scripture, longer than I can remember, has been: "Be still and know that I AM God." Perhaps it could be said, in part, that God is beingness, is emptiness, vast, infinite, unfathomable and awesome. But I have felt that that verse is not only meant as a description of a phenomenon outside of oneself, but also of oneself. It is said in Scripture that we are made in the image and likeness of God. In Buddhism, you have the practice of self-generating as the Guru or Deity. Both ideas affirm that we are indeed of divine nature, being our potential nature. In stillness, we realize our own essential beingness, our Godliness, our Buddha-nature. And, realizing one's own beingness, one simultaneously realizes the beingness of all that is not oneself. Because, as the Lakota Sioux affirm: *Mitakuye Oyas'in*—we are all related.

Eihei Dogen, the Zen master of the 13th Century, called attention to "a fence, a wall, a tile, a pebble." Now, he said, here is Buddha-nature! He might say that a rock has beingness, as does a flower and a star, or an ant and a tiger. Where does beingness end? Can a person realize his or her Buddha-nature without simultaneously realizing the Buddha-nature of the "other?" No separation, no self, no other. No duality, no subject, no object. There just IS. So the leap that one takes is to move from a root idea, "I am that I am," to a broader realization: "We are that we are."

The Mayan people have a greeting: *En Lak'esh*. It means: "I am another yourself." They see their own nature in the other person's nature, and vice versa, and they do not limit their identification only with other people, but also extend it to the differentiated, created world of form in which they live and breathe, in which you

and I live and breathe. You might translate *En Lak'esh* to mean "we are that we are."

Some Mayans actually do not like the verb 'to be' because, if I understand this correctly, which I may not, it may suggest from one point of view that a person exists singly, independently and statically (i.e. I am a weaver. I am a farmer or I am the CEO.) You would not ordinarily so identify yourself because you perceive and understand yourself, and are regarded by others, as standing in relation to another person or something else: a relative, a village, the earth, the sky. Your nature is always changing; it is dynamic. I

> Native Americans, especially on the Great Plains, venerate, and humble themselves before the Great Mysteriousness.

guess you wouldn't say, "I am a cook." It would have to be: "I cook corn" or "food is given so I may cook it." Or you might elaborate: "I am the husband of Josephine, who is Max's third daughter." Perhaps for them it is poor etiquette, if not also false, to single oneself out from those with whom one is interdependent. This is not only an intuitive grasp of interdependence, of the lack of inherent existence; it is also being called to that remembrance in everyday activities, thoughts and communication. Ah! To say "I am a weaver" reflects what you call conventional truth. But, to say En Lak'esh or "I am that I am" or "we are that we are," hints in different ways at your ultimate truth. Would you agree?

One last thing, if I may. Another of my favorite Scripture passages is: "In my Father's House, there are many mansions. If it were not so, I would not have told you." I have loved that since I was a child. I have held some personal conjectures about its

meaning, none of which may reflect the actual meaning.

A Sioux medicine man, Black Elk, was filled with visions. Within the formative vision that empowered him, he saw

> ". . . round about beneath me was the whole hoop of the world . . . for I was seeing in a sacred manner the shapes of all things in the spirit, and the shape of all shapes as they must live together like one being. And I saw the sacred hoop of my people was one of the many hoops that made one circle…"

Perhaps these hoops, from a different perspective, may symbolize different mansions in which we, collectively, live within one grand house. And a house divided against itself, well, of course, it cannot stand.

Since I was small, I have often wondered where I would go when I died. In thinking of that passage, I took comfort that there are many different places I might go, many mansions. A number of years ago I had the thought that we create the world we go to once we pass on. The pictures of truth that I imagine or realize for myself, where I place my attention and devotion, create the world I will go to. I can paint a heaven or a hell, or both, each in turn. Here, the mansions are states of mind, or "lands" as you say in Buddhism, or abodes of consciousness. These are the particular shapes of one's heart and mind, the home of one's being. (As an aside, in your prayer practices, a refrain is sometimes used: "seen as a Buddha (awakened) land." This suggests that as we imagine in mind, or heart, or the mind of the heart, so it is created, so it is; it would not, could not, be otherwise.)

I did not expect to go on so long like this. Perhaps I should put this in a rhyming poem?

I will give you a poem. This is a meditation on the Sun I wrote when I was about twelve years old. I used to be able to see particles of the sun, rainbow-like particles, streaming down in distinct lines, if conditions inner and outer were right. I still can sometimes. These words just came out of me one day.

IMPRESSION OF THE SUN

The rays of the Sun flow ever downward
Towards the cerebrum of the Earth
Whose particles dance and shimmer
As if contained in the colloidal suspension
From which all of man was raised.
By this prescription the photonic power
Even enters the darkest Hells of Earth.
The House of God
Unleashes this invulnerable,
Incomparable gift:
The least obvious, most miniscule
And furthest located pockets of the world—
And the distances between—
All are touched and do not escape.
This is the previously unobtainable reality.
This is One's posthumous offering to Mankind.

© istockphoto.com/AccesscodeHfm

Speaking of the Sun, I have learned that the Sioux worship the Sun in their annual Sun Dance ritual of sacrifice and purification. The Mayans worship the Sun as *Hunab'Ku,* the giver of movement (energy) and measure (matter). Do those qualities refer to your ultimate and conventional natures? Or do they refer to the wave and the particle, the feminine and the masculine, entwined as one ray of dancing light? Jesus is not only the Son of God; he is also a Sun of God. (Was he not, too, a Great Bodhisattva? He certainly exchanged himself with others and took on others' sufferings with patience.) The Mystery Schools look to and draw from the Great Central Sun, the one Sun behind all Suns, all stars, sometimes referred to as Alcyon in its manifestation within our galaxy. The Hopi have been and continue to be the earthbound keepers and venerators of the Sun. The Hopi say that if their daily offerings are not performed, the Sun will not rise. They pour their gratitude on the light and the light pours its blessings on the Earth. Imagine all of that!

Where would any of us be without the light of the Sun?

Should I decide to pass this rambling note along to you, you will be a good sport to read my ranting and raving. It is only well intentioned on my part in an effort to sort through the prism of insights that have shined on the paths of different people in their beautiful walks upon our beautiful planet. SJ

Bill Sloane is a long-time contributor and friend to *Sacred Journey.* His first collection of poetry and prose titled *Silent Thunderbird* will be published in the near future. He enjoys reading his poetry and performing *Kirtan:* call-and-response chanting performed in India's devotional traditions.

The Noahide Path

AVRAHAM GREENBAUM

Nearly twenty-four hundred years ago the prophet Zephaniah foresaw that in the end of days God will "turn to the peoples a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of God, to serve Him with one accord" (Zephaniah 3:9).

Can we today see any signs of a pathway of devotion that has the potential to encompass and unify all the peoples of the world in God's service? A possible candidate to develop and spread the pursuit of such a pathway could be the emerging "Noahide" movement.

The Noahide movement is based upon the premise that all humanity are descendants or "children" of the Biblical Noah, who having been saved from the flood was bound by God's Covenant to observe seven universal laws. The Talmud teaches that six of these laws were originally given to Adam: 1. Do not worship idols (intermediaries between man and the One God). 2. Do not blaspheme. 3. Do not kill. 4. Do not commit adultery. 5. Do not steal. 6. Establish courts of justice. After the flood, a seventh law was given to Noah: 7. Do not eat a limb torn from a living animal. These seven laws and their many ramifications constitute the universal Noahide Code (Genesis 2:16; 9:1-17; Talmud Sanhedrin 56a-b).

The renowned rabbinic sage and philosopher, Rabbi Moses Maimonides ("Rambam" 1135-1204) writes in his comprehensive code of Torah law that the 613 commandments contained in the Five Books of Moses apply only to the people of Israel and Moses was not required to bring all humanity to embrace them. However, Moses was commanded to bring all humanity under the sway of the seven Noahide laws, and all who embrace and carefully observe them are counted among the righteous of the nations of the world and have a share in the world to come, on condition that they do so because God so commanded the Children of Noah and not because they seem reasonable to the human mind (Laws of Kings 8:10-11).

Can the Noahide pathway of observance of these laws be called a religion in the conventional sense? It is noteworthy that with the exception of the law to establish courts of justice, all of the other laws are negative prohibitions. They set the boundaries between what is acceptable human behavior and what is unacceptable, but they do not positively prescribe specific acts of worship and service that people may perform in order to make their connection with God. This is in marked contrast to the Torah code that applies to the people of Israel, which prescribes highly specific observances including regular prayer, Sabbath, festivals, dietary practices, kindness, charity and the whole apparatus of the halachah (detailed practical laws) relating to family life, work, business, property, damages, life cycle etc.

> Can we today see any signs of a pathway of devotion that has the potential to encompass and unify all the peoples of the world in God's service?

While laws 3-7 in the Noahide law code set fundamental boundaries to interactions among humans or with other species, only laws 1 and 2 relate directly to religion and faith. It is because there is One God Who rules over all creation that it is forbidden to worship any subordinate power as an independent god (idol); and likewise it is forbidden to disparage the names with which we call upon the One God. However, until very recently there has been little discussion among Jewish rabbinic authorities on the Noahide code about positive pathways of prayer and devotion for gentiles.

This is probably because the destruction of the Jews' Second Temple in the year 68 C.E. was followed by nearly two thousand years of Jewish exile in what became the Christian and Muslim

lands, where their gentile neighbors already had or were developing their own established religions. Few gentiles were interested in what Judaism might teach about a "third way" that could transcend ethnic and cultural boundaries and become truly universal.

It was only from the 1700's when "enlightenment" thinkers rejected traditional faith and belief that the concept of a "natural" universal religion gained ground. The 1723 "Anderson" Constitutions of Freemasonry stated that Masons can be of any faith and need only adhere to the religion in which all men agree, while the revised 1738 Constitutions state that "A Mason is obliged by his tenure to observe the moral law as a true Noahide".

There is no evidence that Freemasonry has publicly promoted a Noahide pathway for all people, and the Freemasons' internal activities remain for the most part unknown by uninitiated outsiders.

The modern Noahide movement was reborn by the Moroccan-born Italian Rabbi Eliyahu Benamozegh (1822-1900); a Kabbalist, philosopher and liberal scholar whose major work, "Israel and Humanity", summarized his thinking on the topic following correspondence with Aime Palliere (1875-1949), a Catholic who desired to convert to Judaism but whom Rabbi Benamozegh convinced to commit to Noahism. In our times, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, leader of the Chabad-Lubavitch chassidic movement (1902-1992), encouraged his followers to promote observance of the Noahide laws amongst gentiles.

In recent decades a loose and somewhat splintered yet extensive movement has appeared across North America and in many other parts of the world known as the Bney Noah (Children of Noah) in which small groups have begun to organize communities, networks, discussion forums, conferences and the like in order to explore and observe the Noahide code.

From the rabbinic point of view, there is no inconsistency between gentiles embracing the Noahide laws and continuing to

practice their own religion of upbringing or choice as long as it is free of idolatry. Yet many members of the Bney Noah movement have been in flight from existing religious establishments and aspire to build a distinctively Noahide community with appropriate forms of individual and collective prayer and devotion.

In 2004 a New Sanhedrin of rabbis was established in Jerusalem under the presidency of the world-renowned scholar, Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, and has a division in charge of Jewish-Gentile relations that among other activities has heard oaths of allegiance to the Noahide code by delegations of gentiles including Christians and Muslims. The Sanhedrin's Vice Chancellor, Rabbi Joel Schwartz, has written extensively about the Noahide code and has composed a prayer book for those seeking a specific Noahide devotional pathway. An English language version of this prayer book is "Service from the Heart: Renewing the Ancient Path of Biblical Prayer and Service" published by the Oklahoma B'nai Noah Society (2007).

Those who embrace the Noahide code while wishing to remain within their existing religious framework may feel little need for a specifically Noahide devotional pathway. This may be of much greater interest to those exploring interdenominational forms of prayer. There are also many across the world who are unsatisfied by the religious life to which they have been exposed and who seek more universal forms of religious expression.

It will likely be a difficult task to draft a universal Noahide rite that will be meaningful to all and free of anything that some may find offensive. It will indeed need to be phrased in the "pure language" of which Zephaniah prophesied when "all will call upon the name of God to serve Him with one accord".

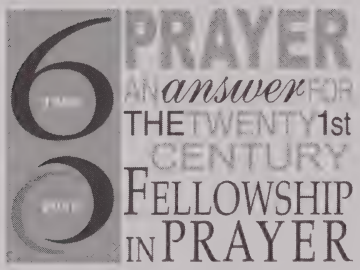
Perhaps one of the best sources of Jewish rabbinical guidance for Noahides in developing their own meditations and prayers will prove to be the outstanding Chassidic luminary, Rabbi Nachman of Breslov (1772-1810), whose pathway stresses the importance of each one's personal prayers in his or her own language:

> Set aside time each day to meditate and pray alone in a room or some meadow and express your innermost thoughts and feelings and personal prayers to God. Use every kind of appeal and argument. Use words that will endear you to God and win His favor. Plead with God to draw you closer and let you truly serve Him. You should hold these conversations in whatever language you speak best. You should tell God everything you feel, be it contrition and longing to repent over the past or requests and supplications to come truly close to God from now on, each person according to his level. Be very careful to get into the habit of spending time every day on your personal prayers and meditation. Fix a regular time for this and then be happy for the rest of the day… (Likutey Moharan II:25).

As more and more people cultivate the art of regular personal prayer and devotion, the next step will be to join together for collective prayers in small or large groups and workshops, where talented lyricists, composers, narrators, rappers and other individuals may help us develop new forms of devotions with which we can all turn to God together as human beings here on earth.

Rabbi Avraham Greenbaum is a London born, Cambridge classics graduate and former BBC World Service commentator now residing in Jerusalem. His is an internationally-known teacher of Torah spirituality, Chassidut, Kabbalah, preventive health care, healing and environmental responsibility, and the author of over twenty-five books.

Share your commitment to spiritual practice—
Your passion for peace and justice!



60th Anniversary Conference

June 24-27, 2010
On the Campus of Princeton University

PRAYER AN *answer* FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

A landmark opportunity to engage with multi-faith leaders, authors, artists and practitioners from across the globe in plenary sessions, workshops and prayer experiences—integrating spiritual practice with social action as a path to peace.

This is an event you won't want to miss!
Register Now!
www.fellowshipinprayer.org
609-924-6863

Made Possible by:

FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER
PUBLISHERS OF SACRED JOURNEY

With the Support of:

F·I·S·H FOUNDATION, INC.

Additional Sponsors:

the Trust for the MEDITATION PROCESS
Infinity Foundation
OneSpirit LEARNING ALLIANCE
Interweave
SHALEM
Christian Scientists

Guest Speakers Include

Gustav Niebuhr

Joan Chittister OSB

Daisy Kahn

Edward Beck CP

Doctor Uma Mysorekar

Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman

Zen Master Bernie Glassman

Reverend James Forbes

Conference Highlights:

Multifaith Plenary & Workshops
Spiritual Practice and Social Action

Meditations
Natural Wisdom and Compassion

Anniversary Banquet, Awards Ceremony & Concert
featuring Pakistani Singing Sensation, Salman Ahmad, The Odessa Klezmer Band, The Universal African Dance and Drum Ensemble, and Lavender Light Gospel Choir

Closing Interfaith Service

For more information please visit:
www.fellowshipinprayer.org
or call: 609-924-6863

Economic Peacemaking

TOM HEAD

One way to come at this work of envisioning a moral economy is to think of it as an aspect of peacemaking. The economy that we know and experience in the here and now is truly violent. Most wars have underlying economic causes, often about access to resources. The geopolitics of oil explains a good bit about why troops are where they are. On other levels, we see the violence of drug dealing, sex trafficking, and the arms trade. And then there is the slow violence of starvation, medical neglect and climate change. How many deaths each day are attributable to these causes? It is hard to admit the uncomfortable fact that our present economy kills every day.

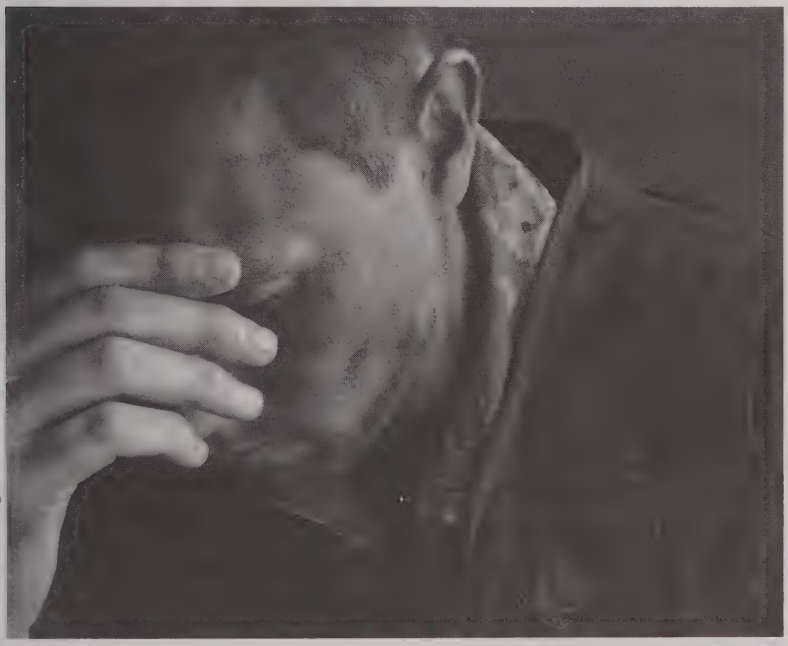
Human beings are at war with other human beings, at war with the Earth and all of life, and much of this war is being fought for economic gain. I resist any simplistic telling of this story, but most of us have our hands in it in one way or another. I know that I do. And that leads me to ask what I might do to be a peacemaker in this economy, to be a healer, to be a reconciler, to be a caregiver to life. This question has power for me in part because it takes me back to my earliest days as a Quaker.

I first became aware of the Quaker peace testimony at the University of Oregon in the late 1960s. I had grown up in a peace-loving home, but I was not a pacifist and knew next to nothing about the peace movement. I had enrolled in the Army ROTC but was experiencing greater and greater discomfort with this miltary training. A Catholic priest from the Newman Center was offering an experimental class on nonviolence at the university. It was a hugely popular and timely course. I signed up for the class in order to learn about alternatives to war. We read the literature of peace and nonvi-

olent social action and heard from many of the prominent peace activists of the day. There I learned about Quakers and other peace churches.

Seeds were planted in that class. By the time I completed my degree and received my commission as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army, I was not at all clear that I could in good conscience participate in the military. As we say, there was a stop in my mind, and this put me in a most awkward situation. I was an Army officer, but I was rapidly coming to the conclusion that I could not participate in war. Fortunately, and somewhat miraculously at the height of the war in Vietnam, I received a delay of my active duty to attend graduate school. During that time I began worshipping with Quakers, came to a clear conviction about being a pacifist and eventually filed for a discharge as a conscientious objector.

The discharge process was involved and engrossing, and it had a somewhat amusing twist at the end. After all of the paperwork was completed, the Army scheduled three hearings to process my discharge



© Radius Images/Corbis

request. The first was with a commanding officer, who reviewed the request, asked a few routine questions and sent me on my way with his approval for the discharge. The second was with a mental health professional whose task, as he explained it to me, was to discharge me on psychological grounds if at all possible, to keep down the number of conscientious objectors leaving the military. We had a nice conversation, but no mental health discharge resulted.

The third and final session was with a chaplain, presumably to offer pastoral care. But the care came mostly in the form of argument. Neither the commanding officer nor the psychiatrist challenged my position, but for the chaplain, it was a very different matter. The chaplain and I shared a common faith, but we came to very different conclusions about the demands of our Christianity. What I was doing really mattered to him in ways that it did not matter all that much to the other officers. The chaplain saw himself as right and me as wrong and he invested a great deal of time and energy trying to correct my errors. After a lengthy session, he gave up on proof-texting and theological argumentation and turned, of all things to economics. I will never forget his last words to me: "You know, this will make it very hard for you to get a job."

The chaplain's threat of my being unemployable was not terribly persuasive to this young man who was clearly willing to be incarcerated for his beliefs if the discharge were not granted. As it turned out, I did not need to go to jail. The Army honorably discharged me as a conscientious objector, I continued my graduate studies and a year later I was applying for a job. It was to teach at George Fox College (now University), and somehow the chaplain's worries had not materialized. In fact, quite the opposite. My pacifism was part of what qualified me to work at a Quaker institution. Looking back on that uncomfortable session with the army chaplain, I now smile at the irony of his dire warning.

That personal journey to Quakerism in general and peace-making in particular

was significant and formative. In the words of the African-American spiritual, I came to sing "I ain't gonna study war no more." Instead I turned to studying peace. And so the questions for me today, in the context of my profession and my life as a citizen, are: What is the economic equivalent of being a conscientious objector? What experience today would carry the same energy, dedication and commitment as did that step many years ago when I said no to war? How do I say no to global poverty and yes to sufficiency for all of God's children? How do I say no to environmental degradation and yes to a right relationship with this living planet? How do I say no to the murderous imbalances and distortions in the way we humans are running this earthly household? How does one apply for a discharge from this dreadful, distorted and violent economy?

Declaring noncooperation with a violent and unjust system is, of course, just one step. It is a start. It is a change of heart, one from which work and witness unfold for the rest of one's life. And just as pacifists continue to live and function in a system of violence as they work to move toward more peaceable ways, those who seek to effect an economic system that is just and sustainable are very much caught up in one which continues to function in unjust and unsustainable ways. But charting a new course boldly begins with first steps. To take the first steps toward a moral economy may require bold and radical action not unlike our historic witnesses against slavery and war. We need to risk finding ourselves on the front lines of a new economy.

Tom Head is professor of Economics and chairperson of International Studies at George Fox University in Newberg, Oregon, where he has been on the faculty for over thirty years. He has a passion for interfaith work and an interest in the integration of religion and economics. In pursuit of putting faith into practice, he has been actively involved with several Quaker NGOs.
Excerpted from *Envisioning a Moral Economy* Pamphlet # 405, © Pendle Hill Publications, 2010 and reprinted with permission.

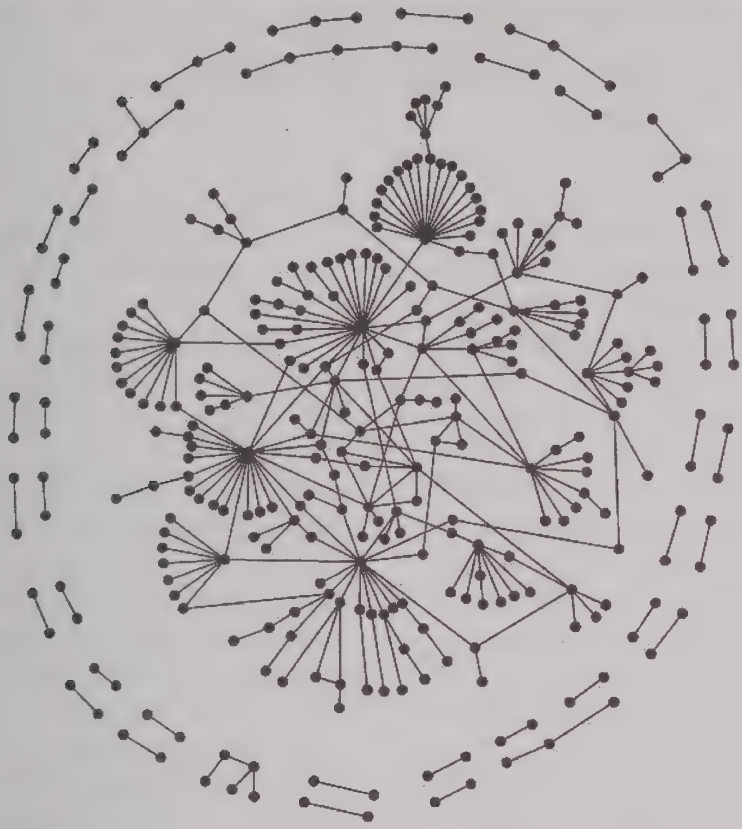
Taking an Active Part

DAVID STEINDL-RAST

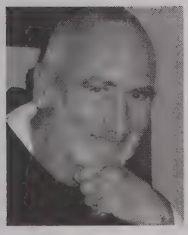
There is within each of us the capacity to be fully human and fully divine; like the archetypal human beings we revere in the great prophets of many religious traditions—for Christians, this is revealed in the person of Jesus. But for the divine to shine through, we have to become truly human. And therein lies the hitch. This is a long and arduous process, and it demands patience, all the more so since no one can do it alone. No one is an island, and becoming fully human is a goal which only the whole human family together may hope to achieve. What we need to learn is deep respect for each other's dignity, mutual trust and a willingness to sacrifice. Jesus, who lived these virtues of respect, trust and generosity to the fullest, used the image of yeast to teach us patience.

Yeast has become important to me lately. Again and again, I am looking at the schematic representation of the bio-chemical pathways within a yeast cell. The beauty of its complexity quite overwhelms me. There are—no one knows the exact number—at least ten times as many cells in your body as there are human beings in this world. Each single cell is staggeringly complex in its structure and function and yet, for the most part, they work together like clockwork—a lot more accurately in fact than most clocks. Life simply does it. Should this great and wise Life not be able to prosper also in the interactions of our human family, if only we were willing and tuned in to its force?

In every part of the world there are today groups of people who demonstrate by the life they share what true human community can be like. Have you personally found one? For me, it is A Network for Grateful Living. (www.gratefulness.org) To find and join one of these cells of hope is what matters most today. It will take patience, but the dough is rising. As a spiritual practice, take some time to sit and contemplate on this image of a yeast cell—there is joy in taking an active part in this awakening of true humanity.



Schematic representation of the bio-chemical pathways within a living yeast cell.



Born in Vienna, Austria, Br. David Steindl-Rast is a senior member of the Mount Saviour Benedictine Monastery. He studied art, anthropology and psychology at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts and earned his Ph.D. at the University of Vienna. He is a recipient of the Martin Buber Award for his achievements in building bridges among religious traditions.

Identity and the Search for a Common Human Purpose

MATTHEW WEINBERG

At the heart of human experience lies an essential yearning for self-definition and self-understanding. Developing a conception of who we are, for what purpose we exist and how we should live our lives is a basic impulse of human consciousness.

Today, as the sheer intensity and velocity of change challenge our assumptions about the nature and structure of social reality, a set of vital questions confront us. These include: What is the source of our identity? Where should our attachments and loyalties lie? And what is the nature of the bonds that bring us together?

The direction of human affairs is inextricably connected to the evolution of our identity. For it is from our identity that intention, action and social development flow. Identity determines how we see ourselves and conceive our position in the world, how others see or classify us and how we choose to engage with those around us.

The sources of identification that animate and ground human beings are immensely diverse. But which identity or identities are most important? Can divergent identities be reconciled? And do these identities enhance or limit our understanding of, and engagement with, the world? Each of us on a daily basis, both consciously and unconsciously, draws upon, expresses and mediates between our multiple senses of identity. And as our sphere of social interaction expands, we tend to subsume portions of how we define ourselves and seek to integrate into a wider domain of human experience. This often requires us to scrutinize and even resist particular interpretations of allegiance that may have a claim on us.

Modernity has transformed identity in such a way

that we must view ourselves as being not only in a condition of dependence or independence but also interdependence. Our connections to others now transcend traditional bounds of culture, nation and community. The unprecedented nature of these connections is radically reshaping human organization and the scale and impact of human exchange.

Clearly, the perceptions that human beings hold of each other matter. In a world convulsed by contention and conflict, conceptions of identity that feed the forces of prejudice and mistrust must be closely examined. Assertions that certain populations can be neatly partitioned into oppositional categories of affiliation deserve particular scrutiny.

"A tenable global ethics," Kwame Anthony Appiah observes, "has to temper a respect for difference with a respect for the freedom of actual human beings to make their own choices." Existing mores, practices and institutions can inform, validate and even ennoble the human condition, but cannot or should not foreclose new moral or social directions for individuals and communities. Indeed, collective learning and adjustment are defining characteristics of social evolution. Because our perceptions and experiences change, our understanding of reality necessarily undergoes change. So too, then do our identities change.

A tenable global ethics has to temper a respect for difference with a respect for the freedom of actual human beings to make their own choices.

~Kwame Anthony Appiah

The prevalent stance that identity is about difference is untenable. Perceiving iden-

tity through the relativistic lens of separation or cultural preservation ignores compelling evidence of our common humanity and can only aggravate the forces of discord now so pervasive in the world. The only alternative to this path of fragmentation and disunity is to nurture affective relationships across lines of ethnicity, creed, territory and color—relationships that can serve as the warp and woof of a new social framework of universal solidarity and mutual respect. A one-dimensional understanding of human beings must be rejected.

As Amartya Sen underscores, "The hope of harmony in the contemporary world lies to a great extent in a clearer understanding of the pluralities of human identity, and in the appreciation that they cut across each other and work against a sharp separation along one single hardened line of impenetrable division." The resolution of the problems now engulfing the planet demands a more expansive sense of human identity. As articulated by Bahá'u'lláh more than a century ago: "The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens."

From a Bahá'i perspective, a universal identity is a vital precursor to action that is universal in its effects—to the "emergence of a world community, the consciousness of world citizenship, the founding of a world civilization and culture." In emphasizing our global identity, Bahá'u'lláh presents a conception of life that insists upon a redefinition of all human relationships—between individuals, between human society and the natural world, between the individual and the community, and between individual citizens and their governing institutions.

In the Bahá'i view, social origin, position, or rank are of no account in the sight of God. As Bahá'u'lláh avers, "man's glory lieth in his knowledge, his upright conduct, his praiseworthy character, his wisdom and not in his nationality or rank."

The watchword of the Bahá'i community is "unity in diversity." More than creating a culture of tolerance, the

© istockphot.com/KingWu

notion of unity in diversity entails vanquishing corrosive divisions along lines of race, class, gender, nationality and belief and erecting a dynamic and cooperative social ethos that reflects the oneness of human nature.

The ideology of difference so ubiquitous in contemporary discourse militates against the possibility of social progress. It provides no basis whereby communities defined by specific backgrounds, customs or creeds can bridge their divergent perspectives and resolve social tensions. The value of variety and difference cannot be minimized and neither can the necessity for coexistence, order and mutual effort.

To foster a global identity, to affirm that we are members of one human family, is a deceptively simple but powerful idea. While traditional loyalties and identities must be appreciated, they are inadequate for addressing the predicament of modernity, and consequently, a higher loyalty, one that speaks to the common destiny of all the earth's inhabitants, is necessary.

An inherent aspect of such a universal identity is recognition of the spiritual reality that animates our inner selves. To be sure, a global identity grounded in awareness of our common humanness marks a great step forward from where humanity has been, but a strictly secular or material formulation of global identity is unlikely to provide a sufficient motivational basis for overcoming historic prejudices and engendering universal moral action. Establishing a global milieu of peace, prosperity and justice is ultimately a matter of the heart; it involves a change in basic attitudes and values that can only come from recognizing the normative and spiritual nature of the challenges before us.

Our quest for spiritual identity is what ultimately informs personal and shared social meaning and therefore our social arrangements. From perceiving that we are all sheltered under the love of the same God, comes both humility and the means for true social cohesion.

Our different senses of identity consequently become fully realized through the development of our spiritual identity; they each provide a means for achieving our basic existential purpose—the discovery and refinement of the spiritual capacities latent within us.

In this respect, the world's religions can be seen to be one in their nature and purpose with each being a wellspring of knowledge, energy and inspiration. They each have served to unlock a wider range of capacities within human consciousness and society—a process that has impelled the human race toward moral and spiritual maturity.

Realizing a common understanding of human purpose and action, especially in a complex world of pluralistic identities and rapidly shifting cultural and moral boundaries, depends on the recognition and expression of a spiritual conception of life.

By redefining identity in terms of the totality of human experience, the Bahá'i teachings anticipate the moral reconstruction of all human practices. When an emerging global society draws upon the spiritual mainspring of human identity and purpose, truly constructive avenues of social change can be pursued.

Matthew Weinberg served for several years as Research Director of the Bahá'i International Community. He is the author of several publications on the topics of social development, science and ethics, human rights and religious tolerance.
Reprinted with permission from *One Country*, the newsletter of the Bahá'i International Community.

Visiting Him

MARY VAUGHAN

Another Hospice visit
Only this time the man cannot see me.
This time the man cannot hear me.
This time the man cannot feel me.
He is comatose, completely unresponsive
Or so they say.

I'm asked to visit. But I ask myself, What is a visit?
Most of my visits are a time for conversation.
One person speaks, and one person listens.
I do most of the listening.
I learn so much.

But this time the man does not speak.
This time, I cannot listen.
This time, I gaze at him lying motionless and wonder, Is he alive?

I speak to him, not knowing if he hears.
I touch his hand, not knowing if he feels.
I feel for him, not knowing if he knows.

He does not answer, yet I feel he hears me.
He does not answer, yet I know he knows me.
Am I speaking only to hear and know myself?

I have visited Him.

As an RN, Mary Vaughan has spent many years serving patients in both Critical and Home Care. She believes her fifteen years of volunteering for HospiceCare in the Berkshires has been the source of her most meaningful lessons in life.

My Accordion

PENNY YUNUBA

My accordion rests upon my soul.
She lives, slicked against my heart,
breathing with my breath,
my life the source of hers,
her resonances calling out unheard harmonies that run within me.

Sometimes I live in other rooms and other houses.
I carry her, my turtle shell, upon my back.
Only her vulnerable soft crimson case
protecting her brittle shell-heart.

When life's prospect frightens me
I comfort myself that she will be with me,
calling out my soul
by singing hers into mine.

Penny Yunuba is a Quaker from Massachusetts who, at age sixty-seven, felt strongly drawn to take accordion lessons for the first time. The accordion experience has called out poems and brought her new personal and spiritual insights.

The Plough

ANNE LININGTON

How could I have known
That when I opened the creaking gate
Of the field of my life
And invited you in
To do the necessary work
That your activity would be so painful
And yet ultimately
Bring about a harvest?

Setting your plough
To dig down deep
To turn over
And break up
Almost touching the deep bedrock
Of my soul
Revealing me in all my created
Rawness.

Leaving me exposed
Rich pickings for hungry gulls
Whilst all that I had previously
Thought worthwhile
Is torn from its root

Dies
And is re-interred
In the soil
Of my life

Now I lie open and naked
As my neat furrows are
Rained upon
Reduced
Frozen
Broken down
Emptied of all former life
Waiting

Then one day
The returning sun of your love
Gently warming
O'er lengthening days
Begins my re-awakening

Precious seed sown
In prepared ground
Watched over
Anticipated
And the Autumn pain
Brings life
And hope.

Anne Linington is a licensed Reader in the Church of England where her ministry is comprised of preaching and pastoral care. Her rural background and love of creation are often featured in her writing. Anne works with adults who have learning disabilities. She lives with her husband, Russell, on the beautiful Isle of Wight, United Kingdom.

Spirituality, Religious Wisdom and the Care of the Patient: Gratitude as Viewed in Hinduism

UMA MYSOREKAR

Hindu Dharma, popularly called Hinduism, is the religion of over a billion Hindus, and is also known as *Vaidika Dharma*, meaning "religion of the *Vedas*," the ancient Hindu scriptures. The original name of Hindu Dharma was *Sanatana Dharma*, or "universal religion."

Hinduism is basically the modern name for the *Vedic* way of life especially the spiritual path followed by the *Arians*, meaning those who have or are developing a clear path or a clear consciousness towards God.

Hindus believe that God is omnipresent and omnipotent and in the existence of God everywhere, as an all pervasive, self-effergent energy and consciousness. Hindu Dharma teaches that all forms of life are manifestations of the supreme self, also known as *Brahman*. This basic belief creates the attitude of sublime tolerance and acceptance towards others.

In Hinduism, *Karma* refers to God's Cosmic Law of Cause and Effect; every action has its opposite and equal reaction. The Law of Karma is the answer provided by Hindu Dharma to the question of why suffering and inequalities exist in the world. The word Karma denotes an action that brings back results in this life or future lives. The doctrine of Karma is based upon the theory of cause and effect. Every human action inevitably leads to results good or bad, depending on the moral quality of the deed. There is no such thing as action without results; "As we sow, so shall we reap" is the law that governs all deeds. In summary, we are the effects of our own infinite past.

The sacred texts in Hinduism including *Bhagavad Gita, Upanishad*, etc., stress a moral code of ethics for every

individual. Among them three important codes of ethics are applicable. First perform all your duties in the spirit of service to the Lord. Perform all your work without expectation of reward. An individual who performs actions without attachment to their fruits is freed from bondage of birth and death, thereby attaining that state which is beyond all suffering. Second is fearlessness; either in this world or in the world of religion, it is true that fear is the sure cause of degradation and sin. It is fear that brings misery, fear that brings death, fear that breeds evil. And what causes fear? Ignorance of our own nature. The third code is that Faith in oneself and in God is the secret of greatness. It is the intense faith in the Supreme which gives the moral strength and courage to face all the difficulties in life and to confidently comfort those who are suffering and having problems.

Every religion stresses prayer and the cosmic effect it has on the individuals and the community at large. Prayers have infinite power—they are believed to move mountains, produce rain in drought conditions, turn hate to love and fear to hope. Prayers can be offered in several ways and in Hinduism one of the methods is chanting of the *Mantras* as have been narrated by the sages and the seers. The Mantras are believed to work directly upon our Karma. The vibrations of these ancient formulas work through the *Chakras* to increase the flow of beneficial energy throughout the subtle body where the latencies and tendencies are stored. A Mantra acts by increasing the total amount of energy available for all of our activities. Certain Mantras used singularly or in combination can greatly accelerate the quality and the quantity of energy used in the healing process.

It's a well known fact that people have recoverd from near fatal diseases, including cancer, by asserting their willingness to live on. In each of these cases the will to live, the self-talk to program their brains into fighting their malady played an important part in their healing

process. These practices help the patient accept his or her illness, positively influencing the quality of life and facing the ultimate with dignity.

Gratitude holds a very high place in the Hindu tradition and there are two facets. One, we must be grateful for everything that we get, but second, we must not expect any gratitude from others. If it comes, that's fine. But if we do something expecting the other person to be grateful, then we become miserable if we don't get what we expect. So the Hindu teaching is to give without expectation. The good deed that is done not in return, but in the first instance is more precious than anything else in this world or beyond. Nothing can repay that act. What is done in return for something previously done can never be as great as the deed born out of sheer generosity, be it ever so small by itself. Therefore nothing can be considered an adequate repayment. It is above every kind of goodness. By itself the help rendered may be a trifle one, but the hour of need when it was given makes it bigger than the whole world.

In Hinduism, there are Four *Purusharthas: Artha,* seeking security; *Kama,* the art of enjoying pleasure; Dharma, conscientious living; and *Moksha,* freedom from all limitations or liberation. They are all good human aspirations. Only when the financial profit, pleasures and desires are against the rules of Dharma, they become *Nishiddha* Karma and so against the Dharma. When one is hungry and someone offers food, ready-made for a cost plus his usual profit, one can still call it an act of Dharma as it was given at the time of need and no undue advantage was taken of the situation by hiking the food price. If such undue advantage is taken it becomes Nishiddha Karma. When one choses Dharma or service to anyone in need, it may not always be free, but, just making it available at the opportune time itself is good Karma. However, denying it to one who cannot afford it in the true sense is also wrong. When one does such good Karma as one's Dharma, one must not wait for the benefit because it

will come automatically. It is just like the coconut tree taking the dirty water offered at its root and returning it with sweet water from its top. Gratitude is an important human quality regardless of the religious faith. One must ever be grateful to whoever renders a helping hand in the hour of need.

When it comes to care of the patient, for the most part, patients are grateful to their physicians and other healthcare workers. However, some feel that the physicians and other healthcare workers are only doing their duty and therefore there is no need to acknowledge with gratitude or thanks. On the other hand, physicians and other healthcare workers must not expect any gratitude, thanks or appreciation from the patients. They must extend their care, concern and warmth towards all patients in just the same manner. It is very helpful if physicians and other healthcare workers are followers of at least one faith and are oriented spiritually so that they can better deal with the sick, especially terminally ill patients.

Faith and spirituality are true assets for all human beings and especially for those suffering and those caring for the sick. No one can snatch away these God-given assets. They help in changing one's outlook in life, to become more humble, understanding, patient and appreciative of all good things in life.

Dr. Uma Mysorekar was born and raised in Bangalore, Karnataka State, India. She is president of the Hindu Temple Society of North America. Dr. Mysorekar has initiated interfaith meetings and spoken at numerous functions to increase public understanding of Hinduism. We are honored to have her as a participant on our Multi-Faith Plenary Panel in June 2010.

God in the Darkness

LISA BARSTOW

I am a woman who has spent a good many of my 64 years struggling with my relationship to God. I have watched my earlier childhood beliefs transform into a more expansive, inclusive faith. I have relinquished God as vengeful judger . . . I have let go of God as form. I do not for one more moment ever want to imagine a spiritual force taking responsibility for suffering. However, it doesn't give me much solace when I cannot turn responsibility over to another entity—seen or unseen—because I then have to believe that humans suffer because that is the human condition. Or at least that is what we have been told.

In Haiti, an exhausted doctor wrote that his "soul filled with light" when he heard a group of injured Haitians singing in the midst of unimaginable despair. We wonder how a people, so continually faced with suffering, could reach inside the darkness and bring out melodies filled with the light of faith.

I thought about Mother Teresa, who wrote of her faith journey. How she despaired when she no longer felt the presence of Jesus—had she been forsaken? No, I think her greatest fear was that she had somehow forsaken him. I remember wondering if Jesus had once again transformed himself and sent his Holy Spirit into the bodies of the poor. Their eyes filled with the Christ, their arms reaching out to Mother Teresa, as his arms reached out to give so much to so many when he was here on earth. As I read her letters, I wondered if she was closer then than she had ever been to Jesus, because he was with her in the slums of Calcutta every day.

When did I begin to "see" God in everything, especially in the disenfranchised people of the world? When did I begin to believe that God lives in the darkness as well as in the light? I'm not talking about the darkness of evil. To me, evil is born from an absence of God/Spirit. It lives in a place where hearts have been left

in a hell of fear turned into the burning fire of ego gone wild. These people believe in nothing but their own gain. Evil exists because we are human. But, I do not believe that evil can exist in God. Perhaps I am describing the Fall from Grace as a metaphor. I speak of the human beings who have forgotten they were once filled with the Grace of God—that they have a God-Self.

In the midst of a deep, deep darkness, Haitians are a people who remember Grace, and from this place of remembering a stronger faith grows. The Phoenix is ready to take flight, one more time. The ashes of the earthquake cling to its wings, trying to hold it down, but it overcomes the weight of despair and flies, as faith, into the next day.

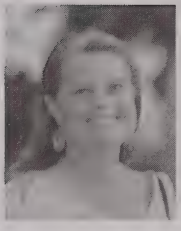
There may be an absence of hope for many. But this doesn't mean to me that they haven't any faith.

I believe that keeping faith in the wilderness, even when you have no expectation that something better may come, is getting just about as close to God as a human being is able. No bargaining, no pleas. Instead, a steadfast stillness aligned with Grace. Not

apathy, but instead we watch, surrender, knowing that we and God are one and there is nothing on the outside of our existence that will ever rob us of that merging. A faith so strong that we fuse with the Light of God.

Jesus did this. He showed us—told us—we could also. All the other faiths know God's love as well. We are a people of many faiths, but I am not speaking about being separate. I do not believe that what we call the Kingdom of God knows separation. That's a human construct.

While so many compassionate, caring souls from all over the world tirelessly work to heal the devastation in Haiti, perhaps we can begin to imagine that Haiti is, in turn, healing us. This is a time of mourning and unimaginable grief for them, and we are being given what unites humans more than anything else—an opportunity to be compassionate and of service to others. To truly know what it feels like to reach out, just as Jesus did, and give our God Selves to one another. Maybe it's possible that in their ongoing relationship with suffering, the Haitians' beautiful souls made a pact with God to show the opened heart of the world a way out of the wilderness of our own humanity. SJ



Lisa Barstow is a freelance writer who graduated with a BA in Creative Writing from Vermont College. She was trained by Amherst Writers & Artists, in Amherst, MA to facilitate writing groups and has done so for the past ten years in various locations. Her new memoir, *Don't Go Back to Sleep*, is her first full-length work. Lisa and her husband divide their time between homes in Maine and Hawaii.

Spiritual Traveler: Co-creator & Servant

STEWART BITKOFF

For the spiritual traveler, one of the most intriguing spiritual practices, through the use of focused prayer, turns free will choice into submission to the higher. In some paths, submission to the higher is the goal and accompanying this level of service is greater responsibility. In this transmutation, love is the catalyst. As the traveler loves, he or she is brought closer to the goal—becoming an extension of the divine.

Following a spiritual path, early on, travelers are taught that life is up to them: we come into the earth phase with a multitude of talents, free will, a destiny or life plan and a wondrous world to express the many aspects of self.

Similarly, spiritual travelers are taught that higher levels of spiritual expression are achieved through submission: turning personal intention over to that which is highest both in themselves and the universe. Further in submission or giving up of self, which is not passive but active, the spiritual traveler finds completion and service. According to Hujwiri, the great master or Sufi exists as an extension of the higher will; with each breath and action taken for the Beloved.

At first glance, personal action based upon free will choice and submission to that which is highest appear opposed and directly opposite to each other. Yet for the spiritual traveler, there is a point at which these seemingly contradictory states merge; this coming together of personal will and submission to the higher is achieved through the alchemy of love.

Because we are in love, we wish to do what our Beloved wants. This fire of love, or burning described by the mystic, alters the consciousness: turning personal need into submission or bending of will; by practicing this bending of will, like the willow in the wind, the traveler

becomes a stage upon which the Divine enters.

As the willow bends
to the wind
And the leaf
curls to the rain,
O Lord, I surrender
myself to You.

In spiritual submission, outcome is tied to intention—is the action taken for self or for something higher. For example, does one get up in the morning—shower, shave, eat dress, enter into the commerce of the world—to make the world better, as a representative of the most high or as a 'player' in the game of life—amassing as much personal wealth as possible? Is this for self or for service?

As in any organization or chain of command, individual action is delegated. In order to be a good worker, parent, or servant we use all talents, including free will, to make the situation and world better. Spiritual travelers are not automatons that assume God wants this or that; they take action based upon an evaluation of what is happening in front of them and through personal intention, turn this action over to God (i.e., submit to the situation.)

Here is an example from ordinary life to illustrate the point at which free will bends, submitting to the situation, and love enters. Let us assume that I am tired, but I need to get up early in the morning to prepare breakfast for my children; that is my job as a parent. However, as a spiritual traveler I do not have time for my morning meditation because I must make breakfast—I turn this duty of making breakfast into a prayer. Remember, I am tired with a poor attitude from staying up late the night before and really wish that I didn't have to do this 'chore'. Question: How do I get past personal friction and resistance, turning breakfast into a cheerful activity and spiritual practice? Answer: By slowly repeating, feeling and embracing the Light in each word, a version of the prayer of submission. This practice turns breakfast into a prayer, a reverent opportunity to make the world a little better. "O Lord, help me prepare breakfast for my children with joy and

gratitude, so, that they might grow and be healthy, fulfilling their roles as your servants. In this duty, help me be cheerful and serve your will. O Lord, I surrender myself to You."

Potentially, the energy of these words, in the form of a prayer of intention, alters my consciousness. A little happier, I serve breakfast to my children.

> The Sufi is absent from self and present with God.
>
> *~Hujwiri*

By slowly repeating these words through the grace of the Path, a 'chore' turns into spiritual practice. For those moments, I have aligned my thought and action with the higher destiny.

According to the Koran, each traveler can serve as God's vice regent or representative on earth. This is our birthright and higher destiny. Through repeating the prayer of submission, we can turn daily activity into a form of spiritual practice. Each traveler is born with many talents and free will choice. Each is destined to rise higher and participate as co-creator in the Divine Plan. Because God loves us, God has created a Way or Path for us to reach higher. This is the path of submission; the path of love and service to humanity. We love, serve and help, because it is our higher nature and the nature of God.

Dr. Stewart Bitkoff is an avid student of Sufi Mysticism. He has spent most of his career specializing in therapeutic recreation and psychiatric rehabilitation. He has a doctorate in education and has served on the faculty of six colleges and universities. He is currently in the process of completing his third book, *The Path of the Spiritual Traveler in Everyday Life.*

My Journey

ANGELA PERKEY

It was 2002, the summer after my freshman year of high school, and I was sitting in a nursing home painting the fingernails of yet another old lady. Her hands were shaking and lined with transparent blue veins. This must have been my fortieth hand that morning, and I had reached my limit. This was not my idea of service. My wonderful and well-intentioned mom had taken my younger sister and me to volunteer in a local nursing home every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. She thought it would be good for us to spend some time volunteering over the summer, that this could help us become passionate about serving others. But it wasn't meant to be. Pushing old ladies in wheelchairs around a nursing home and painting their nails was simply not my thing and I resented nearly all the time I spent there.

I knew there had to be a better way to give back to the community. I was young and inexperienced, but I was a hard worker with a solid mind. I thought these things had to count for something. Surely I had more to offer the world than my fingernail painting and bingo calling services!

I believed in volunteering and thought that what I was doing was helpful, but I was honestly not interested in making life better for people who could afford to live in private nursing homes. Because of this, I hardly cared about the outcome of what I was doing. I was more interested in making a difference in other ways—doing something about the high cost of nursing-home care or the rise of the uninsured population, for example. Now these were issues that I really cared about and that needed to be addressed. I became determined to make a meaningful difference in the world in a way that used my talents and interests.

My parents instilled in me the belief that giving money away to others and volunteering were integral parts of living well. I am infinitely grateful for their guidance and exemplary lifestyles and I have worked to incorporate these practices into my own life now that I am an adult. Yet serving others and giving donations to worthy causes didn't come naturally to me.

When I was in kindergarten, my dad took me to the bank, where I opened my first savings account. This was incredibly exciting. I now had a place to put my meager savings and all of the coins I had found. (I amassed a small fortune looking for dropped change wherever I went, earning me the nickname "Eagle Eyes.") Along with my new bank account, I began getting an allowance of fifty cents each week. I truly loved money even at an early age.

There was a catch, though. My parents said that I had to give at least ten percent of my allowance away as a tithe to the church. If I wanted to give more as an offering that was up to me, but the tithe was not optional. If I wanted to get an allowance, I had to start tithing.

> Service, in its most basic form, is the outward manifestation of your inner beliefs.

Parting with a portion of my new cash inflow was not fun. Even though I had always seen my parents give away their money and they had explained why this was important, I didn't want to take part in tithing. I really liked going to church, but I didn't understand why I couldn't just keep all of the money. But in order to maintain my weekly income, I obliged and put the nickel in the offering plate each week. It wasn't easy, but I did it because I had to.

Eventually, it became less difficult for me to make charitable donations. It became a habit and I started to realize that five cents was actually not that much money. I started to feel good about what the money would be used for and I even gave more when I was feeling generous. As I grew older, I began to understand the importance of giving to others. The lessons have accumulated over time and I have come to realize that all people have a need to live beyond themselves through service.

Each of us has been blessed with individual talents that we can share with others to improve the world. As I learned after volunteering at the nursing home, the key is to find a cause that matches your interests, skills and life dreams. The result is a better world and a better life.

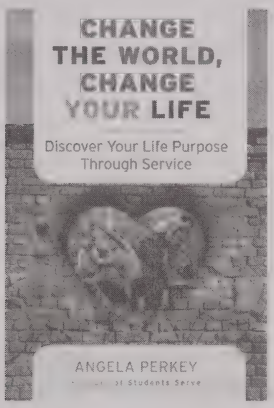
Angela Perkey is the founder of Students Serve, a national nonprofit that awards service grants to college students. Students Serve has been featured in several publications, including the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and *USA Today*. A native of Nashville, Tennessee, Angela now resides in the Washington, D.C area. Excerpted from her book, *Change the World, Change Your Life: Discover Your Life Purpose Through Service* © 2010 Conari Press and used with permission.

Change the World, Change Your Life

Discover Your Life Purpose Through Service

BY ANGELA PERKEY

© 2010 CONARI PRESS



"Being of service is a total win-win. We enrich the world—and ourselves in the process," writes Angela Perkey. In her book she challenges readers to identify their particular causes and match them with their natural talents and goals in order to make a meaningful difference in the world—and to discover it has a profound impact in their own lives as well.

While attending classes at the College of William & Mary, Perkey realized that she and her fellow students "were studying persistent global problems but not doing anything about them." So, in 2006 she conceived the idea of Students Serve. The organization which had its start in her college dorm room has evolved into a national nonprofit that today provides financial resources to college students who want to make a difference. Drawing on her own experience, she proposes how individuals can uncover and act on their desires to solve problems. She suggests more efficient ways of contributing financially, more skillful ways of providing service, and more effective means for sustaining compassion.

What Knees Are For

LINDA ALBERT

I had been stuck on that rock for what seemed a lifetime--stomach hugging the granite—fingers of both hands struggling to maintain their precarious holds, one foot at a time out in the dizzying air scrabbling for a purchase that would allow me to move upward and finally attain the summit.

Two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand were the rule and I was a rule follower—especially in such a foreign endeavor. To no avail. Finally, exhausted and fed up, my body took over. Ignoring the rules and no longer attending to my blithering and fearful mind, I surprised myself by finding a knee hold which allowed me to crawl like a child to the top.

Knees, we had been taught, were for praying but never for use in rock climbing, so my climb must surely have looked clumsy and ungainly to the onlookers who lacked the gift of insight I had just been given. Prayer can take place wherever it needs to, and in whatever form or position a situation requires.

I was at the top. That's all I needed to know—thanks to the wisdom encoded in my physical being, the grace of God, and my formerly unappreciated knees—a body part for which I would now be forever grateful and not ashamed to use. SJ

Linda Albert's essays, stories and poems have appeared in many publications including *McCalls Magazine*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *Today's Caregiver*. Linda's awards include the Olivet and Dyer-Ives Foundation poetry prizes and Atlanta Review's International Merit Award. Visit Linda online at www.lindaalbert.net

Become A Subscriber Today

SACRED JOURNEY

THE JOURNAL OF FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER 60 YEARS 1950–2010

☐ 1 year $20 ($26 Int'l)
☐ 2 year $36 ($48 Int'l)

☐ Payment Enclosed
☐ Please Bill my Credit Card
VISA/MC/DISCOVER $ _____

Credit Card Number Exp. Date

Signature

Name

Address

City/State/Zip+4

Daytime Phone Email

SEND COMPLETED FORM AND PAYMENT TO:
FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER, INC., 291 WITHERSPOON STREET, PRINCETON, NJ 08542-3227

YOU CAN SUBSCRIBE OR RENEW ONLINE AT WWW.FELLOWSHIPINPRAYER.ORG.

Renew Today

SACRED JOURNEY

THE JOURNAL OF FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER 60 YEARS 1950–2010

☐ 1 year $20 ($26 Int'l)
☐ 2 year $36 ($48 Int'l)

☐ Payment Enclosed
☐ Please Bill my Credit Card
VISA/MC/DISCOVER $ _____

Credit Card Number Exp. Date

Signature

Name

Address

City/State/Zip+4

Daytime Phone Email

SEND COMPLETED FORM AND PAYMENT TO:
FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER, INC., 291 WITHERSPOON STREET, PRINCETON, NJ 08542-3227

YOU CAN SUBSCRIBE OR RENEW ONLINE AT WWW.FELLOWSHIPINPRAYER.ORG.

Send the Gift of

SACRED JOURNEY

THE JOURNAL OF FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

☐ 1 year $20 ($26 Int'l)
☐ 2 year $36 ($48 Int'l)

☐ Payment Enclosed
☐ Please Bill my Credit Card
VISA/MC/DISCOVER $ _____

_____
Credit Card Number Exp. Date

_____
Signature

Gift From:

_____
Name

_____
Address

_____
City / State / Zip+4

_____
Daytime Phone Email

Gift To (1):

_____
Name

_____
Address

_____
City / State / Zip+4

_____
Daytime Phone Email

Gift To (2):

_____
Name

_____
Address

_____
City / State / Zip+4

_____
Daytime Phone Email

SEND COMPLETED FORM AND PAYMENT TO:
FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER, INC., 291 WITHERSPOON STREET, PRINCETON, NJ 08542-3227

YOU CAN SUBSCRIBE OR RENEW ONLINE AT WWW.FELLOWSHIPINPRAYER.ORG.

SACRED JOURNEY
FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER, INC.
291 Witherspoon Street
Princeton, NJ 08542-3227

Change Service Requested

Nonprofit org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Hanover, PA 17331
Permit no. 4

ISSN 1096-5939